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ABSTRACT

Children can become script masters if they have a teacher/director who follows certain procedures, such as: (1) select a script that has relevancy to the cast; (2) audition the children via an interview process prior to reading the script for the first time; (3) cast the children based on appearance, sound of the voice, and personality more than the quality of the first reading; (4) read through the entire script with the cast at the first rehearsal, (5) set goals related to the main and ultimate purposes of performance during the early rehearsals; (6) analyze the script in a discussion format and encourage cast input; (7) maintain an open communication throughout rehearsals on character interpretation and the enactment of scenes; (8) reinforce the goals; and (9) schedule a private performance prior to a public performance. (Appendixes include a casting sheet; goals to achieve and how to achieve them; notes from the director/author; character breakdown; musical numbers; and strategies on the usage of punctuation and expression. Seventeen references are attached.) (Author/MG)

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Teaching/Directing

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Teaching/Directing Children How to Read a Script
and Deliver Dialogue with Meaning and Expression

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Course
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Running head: TEACHING/DIRECTING CHILDREN HOW TO READ A
SCRIPT AND DELIVER DIALOGUE WITH MEANING AND EXPRESSION

CS010168

Abstract

EDR 760-761: RESEARCH ON LITERACY I-II

Author: Camille A. Molinari

Title: Teaching/Directing Children How to Read a Script
and Deliver Dialogue with Meaning and Expression

Reader: Professor R. K. Blot

The teaching/directorial techniques involved in getting children to understand the script thoroughly and to convey its message clearly. Children can become script masters if they have a teacher/director who follows certain procedures, such as: 1) select a script that has relevancy to the cast, 2) audition the children via an interview process prior to reading the script for the first time, 3) cast the children based on appearance, sound of the voice and personality more than the quality of the first reading, 4) read through the entire script with the cast at the first rehearsal, 5) set goals related to the main and ultimate purposes of performance during the early rehearsals, 6) analyze the script in a discussion format and encourage cast input, 7) maintain an open communication throughout rehearsals on character interpretation and the enactment of scenes, 8) reinforce the goals, and 9) schedule a private performance prior to a public performance.

Teaching/Directing Children How to Read a Script and
Deliver Dialogue with Meaning and Expression

My approach to teaching/directing children has come about as a result of twelve years in community theatre, one degree in Theatre Arts Education and another in Reading Education, and two years as a Reading and Drama/English Teacher at a Junior High School in the New York City Public School System. As a Reading Specialist and a Stage Director, I have found Children's Theatre to be the most enjoyable and effective way to improve reading ability and to develop the art of communication. This is a primary opportunity for children to be seen and heard.

The following is a detailed report of my most recent assignment as a Consultant for the After School Program sponsored by the Morris Park Community Association. The Association receives funding for their Program under a contract with the New York City Department of Youth Services. The site for the Program was P.S. 83 in Community School District #11 in the northeast Bronx. The Drama component of the Program utilizes a proscenium stage in the school's six hundred seat auditorium. The sessions for Drama took place from November 1989 through April 1990 at 3:15 p.m. to 4:45 p.m.; they ran one day a week during February and three days a week during March and April, minus any school holidays, for a total of forty sessions.

My first responsibility as Consultant was to select a script that was appropriate for third through seventh graders. The only selection guideline was that the show should be a musical and relatively inexpensive to produce. Additional responsibilities for the project included auditioning, casting and directing the children, as well as, training a potential director for the Association's next season.

I intend to describe my teaching/directorial technique in getting the cast to understand the script thoroughly and to convey its message clearly. Children can become script masters if they have a teacher/director who follows certain procedures. The highlights of these procedures are:

- 1) select a script that has relevancy to the cast,
- 2) audition the children via an interview process prior to reading the script,
- 3) cast the children based on appearance, sound of the voice and personality more than the quality of the first reading,
- 4) read through the entire script with the cast at the first rehearsal,
- 5) set goals related to the main and ultimate purposes of performance during the early rehearsals,

- 6) analyze the script in a discussion format and encourage cast input,
- 7) maintain an open communication throughout rehearsals on character interpretation and the enactment of scenes,
- 8) reinforce the goals, specifically those pertaining to punctuation and expression,
- 9) schedule a private performance prior to a public performance.

An elaboration on the reasoning behind each of these procedures is presented here.

Play Selection

The play selection considered for this project was called, Wanna Play?!, published by Baker's Plays of Boston. It was described in the play catalogue as "A superlative entertainment about the pains, pleasures and insanities of early adolescence. There's 'Tug of War', a heartbreaker in which a child sings of how his divorcing parents are deciding who will take the TV, the liquor or the furniture, but asks in his plaintive chorus, 'Who's gonna take me?', and there's 'It Isn't Fair', in which three girls, jealous of one another's varied talents, vent their hostilities only to learn that each has her own strong points; 'Sisters', a wickedly nasty song about sibling rivalry, and many more wonderful songs which

explode with vitality in this brilliant musical revue for young teens" (Baker's Plays, 1989-90, p. 145).

The script called for flexible casting in both number and age range and a cassette recording of the music, sung by the original performers, was available. Considering the limitations in the number of children who turn out for the After School Program, and the age range (eight to thirteen years old), as well as, the delays involved in taping a musical score, Wanna Play?! appeared to be an appropriate selection.

After reading the script myself, I found the material to contain some valuable lessons. "It is the essence of theatre that we are looking for. From earliest times, theatre, like sociology, has sought to examine the nature of social meanings, i.e., what is to be human -- in this sense it is theatre as 'active sociology' that interests us as drama teachers" (Neelands, 1984, p. 65). I also felt that by working with this particular script it would "deepen (the) children's understanding of themselves, others and the world they live in..." (Kukla, 1987, p. 73). Therefore, additional scripts for the cast and the cassette recording that accompanied the script were ordered.

First Audition

The auditions were initially opened to students in

the third grade to the sixth grade from P.S. 83 and seventh graders from J.H.S. 127 who had previously attended P.S. 83 and the After School Program. Flyers were posted in the halls of the school and eleven children responded to the first audition notice.

The auditioners were asked to fill out a Casting Sheet (See Appendix #1) and were interviewed before given a script to read. In talking to the auditioners about themselves, including any stage experience they had, I decided what character part they should read. This decision was based on appearance, voice, and personality. While an individual read, I concentrated on the quality of the reading, i.e., whether or not the reading was done with meaning and expression. Depending on the outcome of the initial reading, the auditioner may or may not have been asked to read another character part.

After all the auditioners had an opportunity to read at least one character part, they were called back as a group, handed the script again, and asked to accompany the tape with solo and group numbers. While the auditioners sang, I concentrated on the kind of singing voices they had and the way they adapted to the melodies.

At the conclusion of the audition, the auditioners were told that casting decisions would be made at a later date, but they should all return to the first rehearsal.

Casting

Decisions on casting were based on the same criteria as used during the first audition, i.e., appearance, sound of the voice (both speaking and singing), and personality. Regardless of the quality of the first reading, everyone was selected for a role, since Teaching/Directing the cast to read the script and sing the songs with meaning and expression would take place during rehearsals. And, as Graves (1983) points out "a teacher who looks for potential finds listening and observing an exciting venture" (p. 100).

Some of the original auditioners who were cast did not return to the first rehearsal (Sabree, Loni, Jimmy, and Bonnie) or dropped out during rehearsals (Jennifer, Anthony, Steven, and Christa). The reason for this behavior may have been due to the fact that the type of project planned by the Association this year was different than the one presented the previous year. This year's project was a musical review with dialogue and lyrics to learn, to say and to sing. Last year's presentation was a talent show with dance routines to practice and songs to lip sinc (mouth the words). Therefore, the problem was the prospect of performing in a musical with a story.

Calls for replacements had to be made in order to get a semblance of a cast. I contacted former members of The

Happy Medium Children's Ensemble, the theatre company I previously ran prior to my consulting, and the trainee distributed additional flyers to the principal's offices of the surrounding schools. Follow up auditions were not conducted as formally as the first one. These latecomers were asked to read a selection of dialogue opposite the original cast members during the rehearsals.

The number of children seriously interested in participating amounted to only five (David, Catherine, Lisa D., Louis, and Christine). Four others were absent constantly (Anya, Julianne, Lisa C. and Dana). Therefore, it was not possible to cast the show as the play had been written, i.e., with twelve characters. I decided to give the five dependable cast members more of the dialogue and songs and the other four less dependable ones were given a smaller portion of the material.

First Rehearsal

The primary focus of the first rehearsal was to read through the script. The cast, the trainee and I sat together in a circle on chairs set up on the stage. Both the dialogue and the lyrics to the songs were read. The reason for this was to make sure the cast had recorded any additions or deletions in the lyrics that were on the tape, but not in the script. It also served to give me a preliminary indication of the cast's problem areas in the

material, such as, unfamiliarity with certain words in the script and the proper usage of punctuation marks and expression. The next few rehearsals included the music, and the cast members sang their affiliated songs along with the cassette recording of the show. The trainee and I sang all of the songs along with the cast members. The cast was then asked to stand on stage to act out the script. This was the start of stage direction.

Set Goals

In order to familiarize the cast with how to read the script more effectively, that is, with meaning and expression, certain goals were set. I wanted the cast to be aware of the main purpose, "to create images that hold and resonate the meaning of the play," and the ultimate purpose, "the image then becomes a focus for the audience's thinking and responding" (Neelands, 1984, p. 65). Typewritten outlines in consideration of these two purposes were provided to each cast member.

The first outline addressed the main purpose and was broken down into three goals to achieve. These goals were similar to those of a public speaker, such as, to explain, to convince, to entertain, however, they were defined and related to the script. The second outline addressed the ultimate purpose and this was broken down into the methods involved in achieving these goals. These methods were

derived from those used by an oral reader, and included knowing all the words, saying each word loud and clear, paying attention to punctuation marks, and using various forms of expression. (A sample of the outline explaining these goals in greater detail can be found in Appendix # 2 and #3).

Immediately following the distribution of the goal outlines, the cast acted out the script, and references were made to the goals. These references strengthened the cast's understanding of how and where the goals applied, and gave the cast a more solid indication of what was necessary for performance. In other words, "As we use(d) language, art or drama to communicate ideas, the process of working with words, paints or gestures allow(ed) us to construct and generate meanings for ourselves as well as for others" (Harste, Short, and Burke, 1988). The cast was then called together to discuss a more in-depth analysis of the script.

Play Analysis

The play analysis was conducted in a review format since the cast had been in possession of the script for a few weeks and had already attempted to act out the parts. The following cast members and the trainee were present during these discussions: Steven (Age 13), David (Age 13), Lisa (Age 12), Christa (Age 10) and Catherine (Age

8). We covered various aspects of the script, and I encouraged the cast to participate in the discussions.

The best way to describe what occurred during these discussions is through Neelands work (1984):

Drama fosters an informal collective learning in a non-competitive and social situation where there is a to and fro of ideas and the negotiation of suggestions by a group intent on a mutual purpose.

By exchanging thoughts and feelings about the script with the cast I recognized the children's own resources for learning as valid and useful tools (Neelands, 1984), and I attempted to develop the thinking, languaging, and feeling abilities in these children (Donaldson, 1978).

I also wanted the cast to realize that we had the freedom to find alternatives to what had been written in the script wherever alternatives were necessary for our enactment of the script. "It is out of the exploration of viable alternatives that learning is enhanced... they will never come from students unless they see the teacher as 'co-learner'" (Herber, 1978, p. 23). By taking the role of 'co-learner' in this process, I created an environment for risk-taking and testing ideas (Herber, 1978). As a result, the cast soon became active participants in the making of meaning (Neelands, 1984).

I started out by reading highlights of the notes

given by the original Director/Author, Bryan Young, which he had included at the beginning of the script. In these notes, Young revealed what the play was about and how it was to be performed. I asked the cast what they thought and how they felt about the comments he made on tempo and pace, the introductory dialogue, the actor's voices, age flexibility and the actor's personality. For example:

Tempo and Pace - The speed at which the dialogue and songs should be presented.

We discussed the importance of keeping the show moving to hold the audience's attention. "In order to make an audience believe, the actor must believe!" (Tanner, 1987, p. 7).

Introductory Dialogue - Dialogue that comes before the songs.

We discussed the relevancy of including this material to give the audience an indication of what was coming next. "In all communication with others, we intend to carry out some purpose. When we talk or write, we don't just say things, we do things with our words" (Austin, 1960).

Actor's Voices - The use of the natural voice.

I prepared the cast not to rely on the tape recorded voices of the original performers. And, I also stressed the importance of using meaning and expression in

delivering the message to the audience. "The fact that people are both the subject matter and the instrument -- the content and the form -- of theatre distinguishes it from the other arts in which either the content or the form is not so clearly focused on human beings" (Wilson, 1976, p. 101).

Age Flexibility - No age requirements for the performers.

I established the validity of the present cast performing the material which was originally performed by teenagers. And, I elaborated on the options the cast had available to get more familiar with the problems and resolutions which the characters encounter. "A reader must possess some background of experience that can be tied to the words he reads, for otherwise they can mean little indeed" (Dale, 1969, p. 33).

Actor's Personality - Acting naturally vs. imitating someone else.

I prepared the cast to bring as much of themselves into the performance and whatever they felt comfortable adding to that performance. There are two approaches to acting: One, "The Representational (external) actor deliberately chooses to imitate or illustrate the character's behavior, and two, The Presentational (internal) actor attempts to reveal human behavior through

a use of himself, through an understanding of himself, and consequently, an understanding of the character he is portraying" (Hagen, 1973, p. 11). We developed the concept of internalizing the character. Our discussion on the Director/Author's notes can be found in complete detail in Appendix #4, pp. 1-6.

Once the cast appeared to be in agreement on the highlights of the Director/Author's message, we moved on to the second part of the play analysis, the Character Breakdown, which Young also included at the beginning of the script.

The Character Breakdown, or the analysis of the characters, was an integral part of our discussion. As Picozzi (1967) states, "in plays, the story is told entirely through the conversation (dialogue) and actions of the characters. Anything the author wants you to know he reveals through the dialogue or stage directions. This means that you must pay close attention to everything said and done." Analyzing the characters in greater detail would also strengthen the ability of the cast to interpret the meanings behind the characters' dialogue and actions. Discussions on what the characters would do or how they would say something helped the cast to prepare to "read between the lines." As a result, the cast was given the time they needed to explore meaning before they were

expected to present meaning as per Harste, Short, and Burke (1988).

The first thing I did was to read the author's name, age, and description of a character. Then, I asked the person who was to play a particular character how he or she felt about playing the part and if they agreed with the author's comments. Next, I gave the cast my impressions of the character which included what I thought that character was like and how I felt that character should act. I then asked the cast if they agreed with my impressions of the character. When I asked the cast if they knew why I made these remarks and how I got these ideas, I demonstrated that my impressions were derived from reading the script.

To paraphrase Hagen (1976), I worked with the cast during these discussions to construct the background of the characters they were going to play and to identify with this background throughout the following rehearsals until they believed themselves to be the characters in the given circumstances. I stressed again, as I had done during the initial discussions on the Author/Director's Notes, the value of utilizing outside sources to get more information on how these characters could be performed.

In the rehearsals that followed these discussions variations of the characters' actions were attempted until

the cast members found the one they were comfortable with -- one where they understood the meaning behind their actions. "To be tough and realistic in teaching is to put aside the temptation to control everything that children do and to accept with the respect it deserves the stumbling efforts of early performance" (Holdaway, 1979, p. 103).

A more detailed account of our discussion on the Character Breakdown can be found in Appendix #5, pp. 1-17.

After the analysis of the characters was completed, we began a deeper analysis of the Musical Numbers which were also listed at the beginning of the script.

Musical Numbers

The way I conducted a discussion on the Musical Numbers was to first play the tape of the songs and then ask the cast for feedback on these songs. I wanted to find out if they understood the lyrics, and if they knew how they should be presented.

We were able to cover the first three songs in the script before the rehearsal time was over. Our discussion on the Musical Numbers can be found in further detail in Appendix #6, pp. 1-4.

Cast Contributions

During the rehearsals that followed the play analysis, we came across some details that conflicted with

our initial concepts. And, in other circumstances, we found ways to improve on these concepts. By conducting the rehearsals in an atmosphere of mutual concern and respect for each other and the project, any deletions or additions were adapted to easily. The cast themselves discovered some discrepancies, and they had the confidence to make suggestions or improvements on character interpretations and the enactment of scenes. It became common practice to hear "I have an idea" and for that idea to be incorporated into the production. The cast demonstrated that they had become active participants and that they were truly invested in the outcome of the project.

The following are examples of contributions by the cast:

1) The part of Rachael was given to Christine and it seemed like a good choice when she was to comfort David/Tom in another scene, however, she seemed hesitant about delivering the following dialogue:

Paul. ...(Rachael enters) Miss, could we talk about one of life's most difficult and exciting phases?

Rachael. I'd love to talk about puberty. I have a burning question on the subject. May I ask?

Paul. I'm an expert. Fire away.

Rachael. Well, my mother says by the time I get a boyfriend, I'll need to wear a bra, but my dad says, unless I need to wear a bra, I won't get a boyfriend! What should I do?

Paul. (Matter of factly) Exercise.

Rachael. Thank you.

The problem was that at 13 years old Christine was "well-endowed," therefore, the lines in this particular scene did not apply to her. At Christine's suggestion the dialogue was given to a 9 year old, petite cast member.

2) During the rehearsals that followed the play analysis, Catherine constantly asked to fill in for absentees. When Christa dropped out, Catherine was given additional responsibility, such as, a solo song called Ordinary Schoolgirl which is a song about a girl who has aspirations of becoming a rock star. After several rehearsals of this song, Catherine suggested that we add another cast member to the scene to imitate playing the guitar on the lyrics about the rock video star. This suggestion symbolized a form of dream sequence which demonstrated the message Catherine/Rachael wanted to deliver in a more concrete, visible manner.

3) During the initial rehearsals of the following dialogue, we utilized chairs, however, the type of stage

property used for the scene negatively affected one of the lines that Christine/Rachael was to deliver to David/Tom. In the following scene, the action contradicted the words:

Rachael. ...When I went through it, I thought I
would die...but I survived. So will you.
Scoot over!...

By utilizing chairs for each character, the words "Scoot over" were not applicable. When Christine pointed out the problem, the following rehearsals included a bench rather than chairs which made the request and reaction to the words "Scoot over" more appropriate.

Reinforcing the Goals

Reinforcing the goals was actually an on-going project ever since the first day the goals were introduced to the cast. However, reinforcement was more intensified whenever the cast needed assistance in delivering their dialogue. This involved focusing on, discussing, and sometimes finding objections to, the way the dialogue was written. We also examined the basic mood or emotions inherent in the scenes. And finally, we worked on bringing forth these emotions to communicate the written message (Tanner, 1985). In essence, we "put our instincts and sense of truth and understanding of human realities to use while probing and grappling with the content and the roots of the material (Hagen, 1973, p. 219).

Once we settled on an appropriate or more effective strategy on the usage of punctuation and expression for a particular scene, it was practiced at the next rehearsals. Several examples of this process are given in Appendix #7, pp. 1-5. The cast eventually took hold or "ownership" of their roles (Graves, 1973) and they began to exhibit more self-assurance in the enactment of these roles. Less than a month before our scheduled performance the cast was able to "drop script." They no longer read from their scripts or referred to it because by discussing and practicing these lines in various situations or scenes, they now had a thorough understanding of the material. As Dufflemeyer (1969) states, "dramatizing words, thereby clarified their meanings by associating situations with them, is more effective than mere verbal explanation of terms, and under some circumstances it has proven to be more effective than use of context clues, structural analysis, or dictionaries." The cast had accomplished their main goal to deliver dialogue with meaning and expression. They truly had become masters of the script. All that remained was the opportunity to accomplish their ultimate goal to convey its message clearly to an audience.

Performances

Although we had naturally responded, as well as,

discussed possible reactions to the delivery of dialogue, nothing could take the place of an actual performance. Questions such as: Will the audience react? When will the audience react? How will the audience react? -- still had to be addressed. Specifically, the cast needed the experience of how to handle situations like staying in character when they heard laughter or applause and to know when to pick up the action again. Therefore, a private performance was scheduled to "break in" the cast on audience feedback. By having done so, the cast was better prepared to handle feedback during the second performance.

Conclusions

First, if you select a script that includes relevant issues to the age group involved in the project, it gives the cast some valuable information about themselves and their dealings with others.

Second, if you audition a cast based on the interview process prior to their reading the script, you could decide who should play which part based on physical appearance, sound of the voice and personality of the auditioners.

Third, if you cast the show based on appearance, sound of the voice, and personality more than the quality of the first reading, you could cast all the children who responded to the audition notice.

Fourth, if you read through the entire script with the cast at the first rehearsal, you will acquire a preliminary indication of problem areas in the material.

Fifth, if you set goals related to the main and ultimate purposes of performance and refer to these goals during the early rehearsals, the cast will become familiar with how to read the script with meaning and expression.

Sixth, if you analyze the script in a discussion format and encourage input, the cast will take a more active part in the decision making.

Seventh, if you maintain an open communication with the cast throughout the rehearsals, they will continue to make suggestions on character interpretation and the enactment of scenes.

Eighth, if you reinforce the goals with the cast, especially strategies on the usage of punctuation and expression, the cast will know how to deliver the dialogue with meaning and expression. And, they will be able to convey its message clearly to an audience.

Nine, if you schedule a private performance prior to a public performance, the cast would be better prepared to handle the various types of audience feedback.

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APPENDIX #1

CASTING SHEET

NAME: HEIGHT:
ADDRESS: WEIGHT:
HAIR COLOR:
SCHOOL: AGE:
TELEPHONE NUMBER: GRADE IN SCHOOL:
PRINCIPAL'S NAME: TEACHER'S NAME:
SPECIAL TALENTS: (SING, DANCE, PLAY MUSICAL INSTRUMENT)

CHECK OTHER AREAS BELOW THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO WORK ON:

SCENERY	LIGHTING	SOUND
COSTUMES	PROPS	REFRESHMENTS
UNDERSTUDY	STAGE HAND	USHER

ON THE BACK OF THIS PAGE, PLEASE LIST:

- 1) PREVIOUS ACTING EXPERIENCE: (PLAY/ROLE/GROUP)
- 2) OTHER ACTIVITIES: (DANCE/MUSIC CLASSES, SPORTS TEAM)

APPENDIX #2

THREE GOALS TO ACHIEVE

- 1) EXPLAIN -- SAY WHAT YOU MEAN (DIALOGUE AND SONGS)
- 2) CONVINCING -- MEAN WHAT YOU SAY (BELIEVE THE MATERIAL)
- 3) ENTERTAIN -- PLAY! (HAVE FUN!)

Teaching/Directing

APPENDIX #3

HOW TO ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS

- 1) KNOW ALL THE WORDS
- 2) SAY EACH WORD LOUD AND CLEAR
- 3) PAY ATTENTION TO PUNCTUATION MARKS
- 4) USE EXPRESSION
 - RATE (HOW FAST)
 - VOLUME (HOW LOUD)
 - PITCH (HOW HIGH)
 - TONE (HOW STRONG)

APPENDIX #4

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR/AUTHOR

Note: Bryan Young's quotes were extracted from the beginning of the script. (Wanna Play?!, 1986, no page).

Tempo and Pace

Young: "Because this is a Musical Review, the tempo and pace of the show is of utmost importance."

Director: Why do you think the author feels this way?

David: The audience would be bored.

Director: Definitely.

We're going through this process and our end product should be so interesting; we should be so enthusiastic, the audience will get into it just as much as we are.

Introductory Dialogue

Young: "The dialogue is more than an introduction to the musical numbers, it is an intrinsic part of the scene and must be handled with the same care."

Director: Does anybody know what that word means, "intrinsic" part of the scene, and why it should be handled with care? Do you have any idea what he means by that? (Pause)

APPENDIX #4

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR/AUTHOR (Continued)

Director: Why do you think he put the dialogue before each song?

David: So it makes sense when the song comes out.

Director: Exactly. It's an introduction to the song. It give you a little indication of what the song is about.

Actor's Voice

Young: "Do not over amplify -- keep it low key and let the actors voices create the excitement.

Director: We're trying to get you a tape without the original singers voices; we want you to be up there singing with a plain piano, for example, in your own voices.
How do you think we'd like you to do that?

Response(s): To the beat of the song.

Director: O.K. (Pause) Let's say you were in the audience, how would you want someone to sing these songs?

David: With expression.

Director: Good! With expression. That's very important.
The most important thing we're trying to achieve here is for you to understand the

APPENDIX #4

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR/AUTHOR (Continued)

Director: words that are in the dialogue and songs, so you don't just say them, but you use them with expression.

By using facial and hand gestures, or other types of movement on the stage, it will help you to get the audience to understand the message you're trying to convey.

Age Flexibility

Young: "The show is very flexible and can be performed by children as well as adolescents of any age."

Director: I was wondering, do you have any problems with the fact that this material may be considered "teenage material?" (Pause)
I think there's only a few people in the cast that are 13 years old; everybody else is under that. Do you have any problems with that?

Response(s): No.

Director: How do you feel about trying to do a play that's mostly geared for teenagers? Any kind of reaction? (Pause).

APPENDIX #4

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR/AUTHOR (Continued)

Director: If somebody said -- "What is the name of this play and what is it about?" -- what would you say to them?

David: Wanna Play?! It's about growing up.

Director: Very good. And, do you think you'll have a problem performing this play?

David: No, 'cause I'm almost a teenager.

Director: And what else? Is there anything else that would help you to perform this well?

Christa: Watching other teenagers on television.

Director: Right. Exactly. Very good.
Does anybody have any teenagers in their family? Brothers and sisters?

Christa: My next door neighbor is on television.

Director: Ah, ha, and brothers and sisters, maybe, that are teenagers? Anybody have that? (Pause)
No? Nobody does?

David: I do.

Director: Oh, you do. So then, he has another advantage there because he can see what a teenager is going through.
And also, I'm sure there's plenty of T.V. shows or movies, and even in the newspapers,

APPENDIX #4

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR/AUTHOR (Continued)

Director: where you hear about teenage problems. You know, what's on their minds, and how they handle it.

That is the essence of the whole play. What is wrong? What is bothering them. How do they get out of that situation?

These are the things that should be on your mind because you have to show us how you resolve your situations.

Actor's Personality

Young: "The one piece of advice I'd like to share with you is to keep it simple -- from the staging to the costumes. Let the actor's personality come through, play it for truth. Trust the material. And... enjoy!"

Director: Even though these particular characters played these particular parts in this particular way, you still have an option, a choice, as to how you feel it should be done. I don't want you to copy anybody, and we don't want to tell you exactly how to do it.

It would be nicer if you brought your own

APPENDIX #4

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR/AUTHOR (Continued)

- Director: personality, something of yourself, that you got from your family or from watching T.V. All these things have helped you, have formed an idea in your head about what teenagers should be like, and this is what I'd like to see.
- Why do you think I agree with the author when he says "your own personality should come through?"
- David: Because the play would be phony. You know, we would just be acting, we wouldn't be using what would be ours.
- Director: Very good. Anybody else?
- Steven: You could feel more comfortable acting like yourself, than trying to be someone else, if you're not too sure what they're like.
- Director: That's good too. O.K. Very good.

APPENDIX #5

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

Note: Bryan Young's quotes were extracted from the beginning of the script. (Wanna Play?!, 1986, no page).

Director: Let's go to the Character Breakdown. We're going to **break down** the characters one by one, and get some specific input from each of you as to what these characters are like.

Paul

Young: "About 12; awkward, sometimes broody, but always has a smile; voice has not changed."

Director: Now, let's ask the person who's playing Paul, how do you feel about that statement the author made?

Steven: I don't know what being awkward means. I never understood that, but the others, I think I could tell.

Director: All right. Can anybody help him with that? He doesn't understand what the author means by being "awkward." (Pause)

(To Steven) You have absolutely **no idea?**

Steven: Clumsy?

Director: Clumsy is awkward. Sure. Definitely. You have to remember that these are young teenagers, they have just become teenagers.

APPENDIX #5

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN (Continued)

Director: They're right in the middle of being babies and being adults. And, they're not really sure of themselves.

They're trying different things out, just like you're doing. O.K.?

Now, in my personal opinion, I think that the character of Paul should be enthusiastic. I find him to be a bit of a dreamer, but I also find him to be a very positive character.

Why do you think I say that, Steven?

Steven: I don't know.

Director: Your don't know? I just gave you three different ideas on how I feel the character should be played, should be done. How do you think I got those ideas?

Steven: Because he's always smiling, happy?

Director: All right. Does, the script itself, in the beginning, who's the first one to come out?

Steven: Me.

Director: You! Definitely. That's one of the reasons why I said that. You are the first one the audience is going to see.

APPENDIX #5

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN (Continued)

Director: I don't mean to say that to scare you, but I want you to know that it's important for you to grab them in those first few sentences of the song that you have. O.K.?
Does anybody have any other ideas about Paul that they'd like to tell Steven that would help him play the part of Paul? (Pause)
Even though you're not playing Paul, you've read the script, right? (Pause)
O.K., no comments. Let's skip over to Kim, then.

Kim

Young: "About 12; vivacious, confident; likes to clown; vocally strong."

Director: How does everybody else see Kim, the part of Kim in this particular play.
(To Steven) Kim is like your cohort. She's on at the same time as you are.

David: Here she is.

Director: While we're waiting for Lisa, why don't you guys tell me, what do you think Kim should be like? How do you think Kim should be played?
(Pause)

APPENDIX #5

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN (Continued)

Director: All right, I'll give you a hint. She comes out second in this play.

And also, in my opinion, she should be enthusiastic, she shows a little jealousy, she is a little bit spoiled, I think, but she's also a very positive character in the play.

(To Lisa) We're just talking about the part of Kim and how you think the part should be played. What is she like? Can you tell us anything about that?

Lisa: (Reads the notes from the script).

Director: I know that, but I want your opinion.

Trainee: In your own words, what you feel she should be like.

Lisa: She should be, you know, like happy and stuff and everything. She has to be...I can't explain it too well.

Director: O.K. Well, you think about it, and I'll get back to you. (Pause)

Lisa: I think that she's vivacious and confident. I know she likes to clown the way she talks in parts.

APPENDIX #5

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN (Continued)

Director: How did you know that?

Lisa: I think she likes to clown by the way she acts sometimes because I've been reading the script and everything. She likes to clown, like once in a while, she clowns around.

Kara

Director: All right. Let's go to Kara. Is the person playing Kara here? Christa, you're playing Kara, right?

Christa: Yes.

Young: "About 13; spirited performer, very much at home on the stage; sings and dances with equal ease.

Director: (To Christa) How do you feel the part of Kara should be played?

Christa: Like, what it says over here (Indicates the script), is the way I feel it should be played.

Director: You agree. Specifically, anything in particular you agree with? All of it?

Christa: Part of it.

Director: Some of it. (Pause)
Do you have any input, Lisa? (Pause)

APPENDIX #5

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN (Continued)

Director: In my opinion, if you're going to do the song like Mae West, one way to describe that is very "campy." I don't know if you know the word, "camp?"

Lisa: Any other words to describe "campy?"

Director: The most basic way I could put it is that you're going out of your way to act silly. You're playing this sexy woman who's also a very tough character. And, I find her to be a very positive one.
(To Christa) Do you agree with my analysis of the character?

Christa: Yes.

Director: O.K., tell me why you agree.

Christa: I agree with you because I know she was like that.

Director: How do you know she was like that?

Christa: Because my grandmother told me.

Director: Your Grandmother was reading the script also?

Christa: No, 'cause she saw movies with her.

Director: Oh, I see. You're talking about Mae West.

O.K. Super.

Lisa, right there, that's an example of

APPENDIX #5

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN (Continued)

Director: somebody from the outside giving her some ideas on how to play the part. We were talking about that before.

All right, is the person who's playing Rachael here?

No? Maybe we could still talk about Rachael.

Rachael

Young: "About 10 (smallest girl); wide eyed, innocent; every inch a lady."

Director: Do you find her to be that way when you read the script? Do you agree or not?
(Pause)

Nobody could speak for Rachael? (Pause)

Rachael, I believe, is the one who sings with David, right?

David: Tug Of War. (song about parental divorce)

Director: In Tug Of War, remember?

I find her to be very sensitive and optimistic especially because of the Tug of War song. She's realistic and she's also the middle sister, right?

APPENDIX #5

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN (Continued)

Director: So, how do you think that person should play the part? (Pause)
After hearing all these facts about that particular character, how should she be in the scene with David? .How would you want her to be, David?

David: I don't know.

Director: Well, she's going to be right next to you right? So what would you need in order to help you with your character? (Pause)
You're in the same scene together. (Pause)

Trainee: If you think about that particular song, Tug Of War, she's supportive and strong, O.K.? She's helping you get through this. so she has to be...

David: Supportive.

Director: Yes, definitely supportive.
O.K., let's go to Viletta. The girl who's playing Viletta is not here again...If you know anybody else who you think would be able to fit into this character, please let me know. If no one shows up for this part, I'll

APPENDIX #5

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN (Continued)

Director: give somebody else that's here the part of Viletta. You could have two parts.

Viletta

Now, let me tell you how I see Viletta. I think she should be strong, she's like an evangelist, she's also very realistic due to the song Think For Yourself (song about substance abuse) which is a very important song in this particular play.

How do you think she should be played? Did you notice anything about Viletta, Steven? You've heard the songs she has to sing. Two important songs.

Steven: Ordinary Schoolgirl (song about rock star aspirations).

Director: Ordinary Schoolgirl is precious. To me, that's the epitome of being a teenager. You know, you all have dreams and goals of what you want to be. And even though she may be acting shy and prim and proper, one day she wants to be wild; she wants to be a rock star. It's just one of the crazy ideas that

APPENDIX #5

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN (Continued)

Director: she has. O.K.? So try to think about a person for that part.
How do you think the person should play it?
Anybody have any ideas?

David: Would the person have to be tall?

Director: Tall? I never thought about that. Why do you say that?

David: Because there's this girl in my class and she looks like she could fit that role very nicely.

Director: O.K. Super. Could you ask her to come in?

David: Yes.

Director: Thank you, David. Let's go over (the character of) Matt.

Matt

Young: "About 13 (tallest boy); girls adore him; bright, good looking; voice has just changed."

Director: Why do they say, for example, "the voice has just changed?"

Lisa: The high pitched voice.

APPENDIX #5

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN (Continued)

- Trainee: In (the song) Growin' Pains (song about puberty). Yes, the boys start out with the high-pitched voice because that's how his voice used to sound until he was 13 and his voice changed.
- Director: How do you think he should play that particular part? (Pause)
How do you think he feels about playing that part? Too bad Anthony's not here, I'd like to ask him that.
How do you think he's going to **feel** getting up there and singing like that in the first two lines?
- Lisa: Maybe embarrassed.
- Director: Yes. I think, though, that after he practices it a couple of times, it won't bother him anymore. That will be really funny for the audience.
First, they're going to hear him sing one way and then in the rest of the song, it's done in a normal voice. So, any last comments on how Matt should be played even though you're not Matt?

APPENDIX #5

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN (Continued)

Trainee: I think he has to be "like totally cool," you know, "like really up there, dude."

David: If he (Anthony) can't come back, I would be glad to take that part. I'm 13 and...

Steven: I'm 13 and I'm taller than you.

Director: It doesn't matter and even the author says it doesn't matter about being the tallest one. I'm glad to hear there's somebody else who'd like to play it. David said he wouldn't mind playing the part.

Steven: I wouldn't mind.

Director: And Steven wouldn't mind.
(To others) They're fighting for the part, ladies.

Lisa: I'd like to play the part of Tara.

Trainee: Oh, I have to make a note of this.

Director: Yes, write these things down. But, I'm wondering how Lisa could play the part of Tara. Isn't Tara the youngest girl in a particular song? The one with three sisters.

Lisa: Oh, yeah.

Trainee: Tara is the smallest.

APPENDIX #5

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN (Continued)

Director: I think it doesn't work because of that.
O.K.? (Pause)
Look at the other people in the cast.
You're the tallest girl, and if you're
singing in a scene that says "I'm the
youngest," it wouldn't work.

Steven: If Anthony doesn't come back, we still have
to get another boy 'cause all three of us are
in that song.

Trainee: Yes.

David: Yeah, but I could have a leather jacket right
here, and I could just take it out and play
the part.

Director: Well, maybe we could work it out somehow.

Trainee: Maybe split the roles.

Director: We don't have to follow this (the script)
religiously.

Trainee: No, that's it. We don't have to follow this
by the book. Just get the general idea and
take it from there.

Christa: I wanted to be Viletta. I think I could fit
her part.

Director: I'm sure you could too. We'll write that

APPENDIX #5

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN (Continued)

Director: down -- Christa's considering Viletta. All right. Let's go on to Tom.

Tom

Young: "About 11 (smallest boy); tries to be tough, but underneath is a very sensitive boy; voice has not changed."

Director: I think David's playing the part of Tom. How does David **feel** that part should be played?

David: Well, he has to be understanding.

Steven: He has to act like my brother.

Response(s): Laughter.

Steven: Really, my brother would do this part great, but, he don't want to join.

David: Yeah, he could take Tom, and I'll take Matt.

Trainee: You like the role of Matt, huh?

David: Fits me perfect.

Trainee: It does?

David: Almost. Except for the age and maybe the height.

Director: Don't worry about the age. We're not concerned about the ages. That's no problem.

APPENDIX #5

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN (Continued)

Director: You said you have a problem with the height?

David: Oh, no, I fit Matt very well except for the age and the height. Because he has to be taller than me.

Director: All right. Let me look (at the script). Then you're saying that, oh, O.K., but remember what we said - just because it says in the script that he's the tallest boy, based on the songs that he has, I don't think there's a need for him to be the tallest boy. Is there? Am I wrong? Maybe I'm wrong. If there's no need, you know, for us to concern ourselves with height, then what's wrong with giving you that part? I don't see it.

David: O.K.

Director: All right. Let's go to Courtney.

Courtney

Young: "About 12 (needs to have blond hair); pretty, leggy model type."

Director: Again. We could change this, right? What do you think, Catherine. (Pause)

Trainee: Catherine, how do you feel about the role of Courtney?

APPENDIX #5

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN (Continued)

Catherine: It's O.K.

Director: Don't just tell me it's "O.K."

Trainee: What do you think she should be like?

Catherine: Happy.

Director: O.K., happy. Why do you say that? Where do you get that from here (the script)?

Catherine: Well, she sings a lot of songs and she sounds like she's happy when she sings them.

Director: I see. Very good observation.

See, that's what I'm trying to find out. Are you reading this script? And are you applying what you're reading? She just said, "I have read this script, I have also gone over the songs and they seem happy, and that's how I think the part should be played." That's what I'm trying to get from you. That is why I'm doing this. Thank you, Catherine.

Tara

Young: "About 11; athletically inclined; cute, animated tomboy."

Director: How do you think the part should be played?

APPENDIX #5

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN (Continued)

Lisa: Well, I know the song Sisters she was kinda like "I want to be the queen." She was kind like, you know, like...

Steven: Conceited.

Director: Snotty and conceited. O.K.

Lisa: Definitely. "I want to be the queen, I want to be on top of everything."

Director: I felt that way too. I felt that she was a little brat and spoiled.

Lisa: She wanted everything.

Director: She's a jealous person also, right?

Lisa: Yeah.

Director: Very good! We certainly have that character down pat.

All right, now. I think that's it.

You know what we'll do now? Let's play the songs. We'll go through the songs and then we'll stop the tape and talk about them.

O.K.?

Response(s): O.K.

APPENDIX #6

MUSICAL NUMBERS

Wanna Play (Song re having fun)

Director: O.K. David, tell me what you noticed.

David: After "ran to my friend's house," it's "Wanna come and play" not "Wanna play today."

Director: Very good. I'm glad you brought that up. There's been some word changes in the script, so please make sure you have them all... Thanks for coming in for the extra part, Catherine.

Do you have any comments about this particular song?

Response(s): I like it.

Director: Oh, I'm so glad you like it.

Response(s): (Laughter)

Director: What else can you tell me about it?

Response: It's a happy song.

Director: Definitely. Any other comments besides that?

(Pause)

What are the things he's talking about in this song? You don't have to do it from memory now; look at your script.

Director: Look at the things he's saying -- "It's a

APPENDIX #6

MUSICAL NUMBERS (Continued)

perfect day." and "you're going out in the sun," and "you're going to play ball games and all kinds of games," so how do you think you should be **feeling**?

Response: Excited.

Director: Exactly. And, you have to remember, it's the first song. You have to catch the audience with the first number.

All right. We can go on to the next song.

Ordinary Schoolgirl (Song re rock star aspirations)

Director: Oh, it seems everybody likes this one...
Somebody said they didn't like a certain part. I think it was Lisa. Why not.

Lisa: What part?

Director: I think it was the third verse.

Lisa: Because it drags. The other songs, they have a little excitement in them. And, in this one, it's just like...

Director: That's a good observation, though. Why do you think they did that?

Christa: Because she's telling what she acts like at the beginning, and then, she tells what she really wants to be like.

APPENDIX #6

MUSICAL NUMBERS (Continued)

Director: Exactly. So, it's like a prerequisite, it comes right before she goes crazy on you, so that the audience is surprised. You see this sweet, little, demure girl coming out with polite manners, and then, all of a sudden, it picks up into this wild being; she goes crazy. What do you think will happen, Lisa?

Lisa: It's gonna be like, O.K.

Response(s): (Laughter)

Director: To say the least. All right. There was another thing I wanted to say. Can you pick up the beat? Remember, he (the author) was telling us it's a musical review, and it's got a certain tempo. Stay with the words of the song, so you won't be two beats behind.

Response(s): We don't know it yet.

Director: I know it's new. The more we play it, the better you'll learn it. O.K.? Let's go to the next song.

Computer (Song re computer fantasy)

Director: I really liked listening to that number because I think Christa's voice is perfect

APPENDIX #6

MUSICAL NUMBERS (Continued)

Director: for this particular song.

Trainee: She just has to be a little louder.

Director: (To Christa) I don't know why you're so hesitant...

(To Steven) At first, I didn't think you realized how you should be singing this song, until you got to the part about caring. Then you realized, like Lisa pointed out, thank you very much, that you are in love with this computer. You think it's alive; you wish it was. O.K.?

Also, it must help that you have a computer so you can relate to that. Again, something from the outside should help you perform this better.

(To all) Any other comments or questions about Computer, or do we have to leave now?

Trainee: Yes.

Director: Unfortunately. All right, I'll close up. I'll meet you back here Monday at 3:15.

Trainee: If you see anybody else who is supposed to be here, would you please tell them that we'll be here Monday and to come with their script.

APPENDIX #7

STRATEGIES ON THE USAGE OF PUNCTUATION AND EXPRESSION

Note: The names of the cast members are followed by a slash mark(/) and then the names of the characters, e.g. David/Tom.

1) Italics

Definition: Words written in italics are an indication to emphasize these words.

Example:

Tom. But I wonder...

Who's gonna keep *me*??

Resolution: David/Tom succeeded in expressing the sadness called for in this sentence by both a verbal emphasis on the word "me" and the physical gesture of placing his hand across his chest.

2) Exclamation Point

Definition: An exclamatory sentence is an indication of heightened emotion.

Example:

Tom. Parents who get divorced are jerks!

Resolution: David/Tom succeeded in expressing the anger called for in this sentence by raising his voice particularly on the last word in the sentence.

APPENDIX #7

STRATEGIES ON THE USAGE OF PUNCTUATION AND EXPRESSION

3) Ellipsis

Definition: Ellipsis or "three dots" represents a pause.

Example:

Tom. They're stupid and selfish and...

Rachael. (Puts her arm around him) And you're
 angry and scared...I know. I've been there.

Resolution: David/Tom elaborated on this moment by taking in another breath after he said the last word which gave the impression he intended to continue, but could not or was stopped from doing so when Christine/Rachael put her arm around him.

3) Period vs. Exclamation Point

Question: Should the last line (Catherine/Courtney's) have ended in a period or an exclamation point?

Example:

Tara. ...But with love, hard work and each other...

Kim. ...we'll cross the finish line...

Courtney. ...and come out winners (!)

APPENDIX #7

STRATEGIES ON THE USAGE OF PUNCTUATION AND EXPRESSION

Resolution: Catherine/Courtney succeeded in acknowledging this very positive statement by raising her voice in an exalted fashion.

5) Question Mark vs. Period

Problem: The question mark at the end of a one word sentence in Catherine/Courtney's dialogue as listed below was initially ignored in her delivery.

Example:

Paul. You seem a happy sort...tell me, what
 have you noticed about puberty?

Courtney. (Now unhappy) Puberty? My parents say...

Resolution: When Catherine/Courtney paid attention to the question mark, she gave the impression of thinking about her response to Lewis/Paul's question.

Another Problem: The question marks at the end of two sentences in David/Tom's dialogue as listed below were also initially ignored in his delivery.

Example:

Rachael. ...You might even end up better off.

Tom. Better? How?

Resolution: By paying attention to the question marks, David/Tom gave the impression that he could not believe her but wanted to hear what she had to say.

APPENDIX #7

STRATEGIES ON THE USAGE OF PUNCTUATION AND EXPRESSION

6) Period

Problem: Lisa/Viletta's dialogue included a sentence containing only one word and ending with a period, but she read it in combination with two words from the sentence that came after it.

Example:

Viletta. ...(Indicates microphone) Is this live?
("Sorry, you know.") Sorry. You know, turns
the household....

Resolution: When Lisa/Viletta read these sentences as written, the delivery clearly explained that the character apologized for hitting the microphone.

7) Hyphen

Definition: A hyphenated word should be dragged out for special effect.

Example:

Tom. You know, the new girl he's been seeing?

Paul. Yeah.

Tom. She du-u-u-mped him.

Resolution: David/Tom succeeded in the delivery of this line by including a touch of sarcasm in his voice.

8) Apostrophe vs. No Apostrophe

Question: Should a song line be sung as written?

STRATEGIES ON THE USAGE OF PUNCTUATION AND EXPRESSION

Example:

Paul. ...Mae I'm Heartbroken -- (6 Beats)

Because You Don't Care

Note: Louis/Paul was convinced he heard the words "I am" on the cassette tape rather than the contraction "I'm." The confusion here was the original singer held the note for an extra beat on the contraction "I'm."

Resolution: Louis/Paul managed to say these two words in the same amount of time.

9) Comma vs. No Comma

Problem: When someone else filled in for Louis/Paul one day and read the following sentence, the difference in readings was outstandingly different in a negative way. The reason for this was that he ignored the usage of the comma which was to pause slightly at that point in the sentence in order to reflect on the statement being made.

Example:

Kim. ...All your dreams start in your head.

Paul. The trouble is, most of them get stuck there.

Resolution: Pay attention to the punctuation marks.